



# Media release

Beijing 25.10.2023

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## High-Tech Made for Humans – Get to Know Cybathlon!

**Beijing, October 25<sup>th</sup> – This afternoon, the Embassy of Switzerland in China invited the public to participate in live demonstrations of intelligent assistive technologies and learn about the Cybathlon initiative and its big competition, held in Zurich in 2024. The guests also experienced blind jogging, tasted pastries made by bakers with physical and intellectual disabilities, and took part in discussion on how to improve social inclusion.**

During the event, the team from Suzhou Institute of Biomedical Engineering and Technology under Chinese Academy of Science demonstrated their developed robotic, forearm prosthesis. The team won the championship title in the Arm Prosthesis Race at the Cybathlon Challenges 2023 in March in Suzhou and is setting its sights on the Cybathlon 2024 in Zurich, Switzerland.

Another demonstration team came from NextVPU, which is a Chinese company developing a barrier-free product to compete in the Cybathlon 2024 in the Vision Assistance Race discipline. They showed their blind reader at the event.

The Beijing He Yajun Blind Jogging Team explained how coaches and blind joggers overcome difficulties and insist on training. Using blindfolds and connecting to their guide through a running tether, guests also tried their hand at blind jogging.

Wenxin Bakery organized by Aid and Service Association Yanqing-Beijing (A&S) gave bakers with disabilities the opportunity to utilize their baking expertise by providing delicious snacks for the event and interacting with guests. A&S is a non-profit organization in Yanqing District, Beijing, which works towards better social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities by training and providing jobs in car repair, baking, supermarket staffing and eco-gardening.

The event also included games and workshops and a small exhibition about Cybathlon 2024, to help guests understand the practical difficulties and needs of people with disabilities in their daily lives, and to explore topics on how to improve social inclusion.

‘A considerable number of people worldwide live with a disability. Assistive technologies can help them to solve daily challenges and enable them to enjoy more independence and social inclusion,’ said Jürg

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Burri, Swiss Ambassador to China, 'Cybathlon is a unique project initiated by ETH Zurich, the "Olympics of assistive technologies". Beyond the competition, it is also a technology platform for researchers to exchange, a community of people committed to an inclusive and barrier-free society, a tech transfer opportunity and a public campaign. It aims to create a world without barriers for people with disabilities.'

Cybathlon is a non-profit project by ETH Zurich, the highest-ranking university in continental Europe. Teams from all over the world compete to create the most innovative assistive technologies. Each team is made up of a pilot (with a disability) and a technology developer from a university or tech company. Together, they tackle everyday tasks that can be real obstacles for people with disabilities, including tying shoelaces with a robotic arm prosthesis, balancing on rocks with a prosthetic leg, or overcoming uneven terrain with an exoskeleton. The competition not only helps to promote research in the field of assistive technology but also raises awareness about disability inclusion on a national and international level.

The Cybathlon competition is a quadrennial event, with the next Edition taking place on October 25-27, 2024, with Zurich, Switzerland, as a main location and several international competition hubs. The main competition is preceded by a series of international challenges, public activities and educational programs. At the Cybathlon Challenges 2023 in Jiangsu in March, disabled competitor Xu Min won the championship title alongside her team from the Suzhou Institute of Biomedical Engineering and Technology. Xu was equipped with a robotic forearm prosthesis and completed the challenges in the shortest time with no mistakes.

The Cybathlon 2024 is organized in eight disciplines: arm prosthesis, assistance robot, vision assistance, brain-computer interface, exoskeleton, functional electrical stimulation bike, leg prosthesis and wheelchair. The Swiss Embassy encourages interested Chinese technical teams, institutions and business partners to register for the competition.

The 'Get to Know Cybathlon' is part of the Swiss Embassy's 2023 campaign 'Diversity + Me'. Cultural and societal diversity is one of Switzerland's greatest strengths. Switzerland is known for its linguistic, cultural and political diversity, and in more recent years, has invested in other areas such as gender equality, disability, age, LGBTQI and social mobility, etc.

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